

CENTRE STARTS DRAFTING BILL TO INCLUDE HATEES TO ST LIST IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

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Arjun Munda

The Union government is now pushing to deliver as soon as possible on the promise to add the Hatee community of Himachal Pradesh to the Scheduled Tribes (ST) list along with three other communities in Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh, as approved by the Union Cabinet in September this year.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) has now initiated the process to draft the Bill to amend the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 accordingly for this, sources told *The Hindu* on Friday, adding that the Ministry is aiming to introduce the Bill in Parliament as soon as possible.

Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda had on September 14 announced that the Cabinet had cleared a proposal to add the Hatee community in the Trans-Giri region of the Sirmaur district in Himachal Pradesh to the ST list. This announcement had come a month before the dates for the Assembly elections in the State were announced by the Election Commission of India. The State is set to vote on Saturday, November 12.

Besides the Hatees, the Bill being drafted by the MoTA will also include the addition of the Narikoravan and Kurivikkaran hill tribes to the ST list of Tamil Nadu and the Binjhia community to the ST list of Chhattisgarh.

The Bill will also include the addition of synonyms for 11 tribes in Chhattisgarh and one tribe in Karnataka so that variations in their spellings and pronunciations do not result in people being left out of beneficiary schemes – as announced by Mr. Munda in September.

While making the announcement, Mr. Munda's colleague and Himachal MP Anurag Thakur had said that the move to add Hatees to the ST list was a "historic" one and thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for it.

The move is set to add 1.6 lakh Hatee people of the Sirmaur district in Himachal Pradesh to the ST list.

The move has drawn flak from Scheduled Caste communities of Sirmaur district (which has two Assembly seats reserved for SCs) and the Gujjar community, who are currently the only ST community in the district, as reported by *The Hindu* on October 29.

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